

Clarett Gets Backing Of Conyers, Jackson

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Suspended Ohio State running back Maurice Clarett drew the backing of the dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), and the Rev. Jesse Jackson yesterday in his legal battle to gain admission to the 2004 NFL draft.

Clarett's treatment by Ohio State officials and his decision to file suit against the NFL earlier this week were among the topics discussed in an issues forum, "From the Field to the Front Office: Diversity in the Sports Industry," as part of the caucus's 2003 annual legislative conference.

While Jackson said he wished Clarett would stay in school, he took issue with the NFL rule that requires players to be at least three years removed from high school to enter the NFL draft. Clarett is challenging that rule, in effect since 1990, on antitrust grounds.

"If he's old enough and tough enough to go to Iraq, if he's old enough and tough enough to pay taxes, if he can answer the bell, then let him work!" Jackson said.

NFL Hall of Famer Jim Brown, who has been an adviser to Clarett's family since he was suspended by Ohio State officials, called on the caucus to support his case.

"The rule that they're fighting right now is a rule that is going to keep an exceptional individual out of an ability to make a living," Brown said.

Conyers expressed his support in a prepared statement. "Like a lot of young kids, he's made mistakes," Conyers said. "But he . . . is challenging a draft rule which the league tells us is designed to help kids, but really seems to institutionalize a farm system that reaps huge financial rewards for the colleges and pros, and operates primarily at the expense of African American teenagers." . . .

Jammal Lord threw two long touchdowns less than two minutes apart in the third quarter, and No. 15 Nebraska surprised Southern Mississippi with its passing game in a 38-14 victory in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Lord was 6 for 14 for a season-high 124 yards and no interceptions. He also ran for a score.

Playing in front of a record home crowd of 36,125, the Golden Eagles never gave themselves a chance to pull the upset. Southern Miss (2-2) committed five turnovers, and the Cornhuskers (4-0) turned the first three into touchdowns. . . .

Navy's women's soccer team will host No. 1 North Carolina tonight at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis. The Midshipmen (7-0-1) have a 34-game regular season unbeaten streak but have yet to face a team like the Tar Heels (9-0), who have won 17 national championships, in that span.

Navy has been actively promoting the game as "Break the Record Night," in an attempt to better the NCAA attendance record for a women's soccer game (6,070 watched Syracuse and Connecticut play in 1999).

Kickoff is 7 p.m., and tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children.

Golf

Tway Leads in Texas

Bob Tway had seven straight birdies in a 9-under 61 and was tied with Heath Slocum for the lead after the first round of the Texas Open.

They matched the course record at the La Cantera Golf Club in the limestone hills north of San Antonio. . . .

Scotland's Simon Yates, Denmark's Soren Hansen and Ireland's Gary Murphy shot 66s to share the first-round lead at the Dunhill Links Championship in St. Andrews, Scotland.

Pro Basketball

Terry Stays With Hawks

Jason Terry will remain with Atlanta after the Hawks matched the three-year, \$22.5 million offer sheet the free agent guard signed with the Utah Jazz. . . .

Rockets center Yao Ming, who endorsed Nike products during his rookie season, is close to reaching an agreement with rival Reebok, a person familiar with the discussions said.